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FOGG ART MUSEUM
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

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Newsletter Number Seven

Dear Member:

We have just received the following report from Director Cooney in Cairo.

"During the past season there has been a great change in general conditions in Egypt. The atmosphere of unrest and antagonism towards non-Egyptians has disappeared, making way for the friendliness that was always one of the finest characteristics of Egypt. More visitors are coming to Egypt and an impressive number of foreign scholars have come here to study. There is, in my opinion, no doubt that this new spirit will continue and that greater cooperation between Egyptians and foreigners will be typical of the immediate future.

"Excavations during the present season have been few. At the beginning of the season the Service des Antiquités concluded a few excavations that had been in progress, but for the past three or four months all work has been suspended due to lack of funds. There is little prospect that substantial financial support will be available in the near future. Perhaps the example of the Egypt Exploration Society will set a precedent for future work for during the present season, under the direction of Professor Brian Emery, the Society has resumed the excavation of the archaic cemetery at Sakkara North for the Service des

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Antiquités. This cemetery is doubtless our best, and perhaps only, hope for recovering the history of the Archaic Age; it is encouraging to find so important a site being studied by the combined efforts of an Egyptian and English organization. One vast tomb has been uncovered during the present season, in some respects one of the most interesting so far found here, and though repeatedly plundered it still contained a large number of objects.

"The Oriental Institute of Chicago continued the long task of recording the temple of Medinet Habu, concentrating this season's work on the Boat Room of Rameses II, a task that will be continued into next season. While the recording of surface remains is always less spectacular than excavating, the gradual and inevitable deterioration of exposed monuments makes this work imperative. Indeed under present circumstances it might be well to consider the advisability of suspending extensive excavations in favor of recording the publishing known monuments and objects. One other foreign expedition, under the direction of Dr. Janssen assisted by M. Mekhitarian, was active at Thebes during this season, when still another beginning was made on the great task of recording the known tombs of this great necropolis. The labor involved in copying the texts and photographing the scenes is so great and so essential to Egyptological studies that a larger staff is required and it would perhaps be best if some international body could assist.

"Despite the absence of active excavations there is no lessening of interest in research by our Egyptian colleagues. The Universities have many students in Egyptology, all scholars have publications in progress and there is a general appreciation of the importance and value of the ancient remains. But most encouraging is the spirit of complete cooperation that is one of the results of the new government

of Egypt. The Egyptians are eager to have foreign scholars, particularly Americans, in their country and in general they have a tendency to exaggerate the extent of American participation in Egyptology. As we know, Egyptological studies in America are restricted to a few institutions but the potential influence of American scholars in Egypt is out of all proportion to their numbers. This is in part due to the tradition of the Americans who have worked so ably in Egypt and partly to the absence of American influence in Egyptian internal affairs. We enjoy a position of complete and disinterested neutrality and considerable prestige. The maintenance and implementation of this influence is one of the most useful services that the Research Center can render. One example will suffice to illustrate this new spirit. A new museum is under consideration to relieve the crowded condition of the present Egyptian Museum and tentative plans have been drawn up. The Director of the Antiquities Service has requested the criticism and advice of various persons, among them myself, concerning the merits of these plans. A frank opinion was requested and rendered. It is along such lines that research in Egypt will be conducted in the future and by rendering disinterested service the Center can perform a useful service to Egyptology.

"There is a constant demand for lectures, particularly in the field of Egyptian art and archaeology. I have taken several groups of Egyptian students of Egyptology on tours of certain sections of the Cairo Museum; in addition the Institute for Art Studies requested a lecture on Thebes as a site important in the history of art, preparatory to the school's annual visit to Thebes - the lecture was given early in February. On 31 March and 1 April I am scheduled to lecture at Alexandria University on 'Egyptian Works of Art in America' and 'The

History of Glass in Dynastic Egypt.' The latter lecture will be repeated in April at Fuad I University in Cairo with an additional lecture, 'The Egyptian Collection in Brooklyn.' The lectures in Alexandria are jointly under the University and the Royal Archaeological Society and will be delivered at the University. In all cases the subjects have been selected by the authorities of the institutions concerned."

No less interesting is the following Interim Report, dated February 8, from Professor John A. Wilson of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, and former Chairman of the Center.

"Greek mythology tells of a giant Antaeus who delighted in wrestling all comers. The secret of his success was that he renewed his strength every time his feet touched the earth. Thanks to the Fulbright program and the American Research Center in Egypt, I am renewing my strength by an Antaeian year, a year away from the classrooms, study, and committee meetings of Chicago, a year with my feet on the soil of Egypt. The account of the entire year may be the occasion for a report next summer; at present I wish to report on one month only.

"My Fulbright scholarship is for 'research in art and archaeology' in Egypt. I am studying certain phases of ancient Egyptian life by visiting archaeological sites in the country, some of which I had never seen, some of which show material new since I lived in Egypt from 1926 to 1931. The materials in Egypt itself are more than one mind can encompass in nine months of study. Why then did I go running off to the Sudan for one of those precious months?

"From December 22nd to January 21st, three of us - Dr. Harold H. Nelson, who was formerly Director of the Oriental Institute's work at Luxor, Mrs. Wilson, and I - made a trip of 1800 miles by boat and train, to Khartoum and to the archaeological sites around the Fourth

Cataract. Our general purpose was to study Egyptian monuments in regions which lie hundreds of miles south of ancient Egypt.. Our specific goal was the copying of certain inscriptions in hieroglyphic in a museum near the Fourth Cataract. There is a great deal of modern talk about the 'unity of the Nile' and the importance of close relations between Egypt and the Sudan. Our interest lay in two ancient unions of Egypt and the Sudan: (a) the period of Egyptian imperialism from 1500 to 1150 B. C., when Egypt held control of the Nile as far as the Fourth Cataract, and (b) the period of Sudanese imperialism from 750 to 650 B. C., when the 'Ethiopian' kings of the Sudan exercised control over Egypt. The latter period demonstrates the saying that 'the hem is stronger than the cloth,' because for three hundred years after 750 B. C. the provincial Sudan tried to be more Egyptian than Egypt itself. What we were seeing was a back-country which was little affected by the cosmopolitan excitements of the Mediterranean world around 700 B. C. and which therefore was very fundamentalist in its religious expression. For example, Egypt itself has about thirty-five royal pyramids, whereas in one short stretch of the Sudan there are about four times that number! To be sure, by Egyptian standards they may be small pyramids, but there is no denying that they are pyramids constructed for royal burial following the Egyptian pattern.

"The Sudan Government was good enough to call our little expedition 'a scientific mission,' so that we enjoyed special travel rates and the greatest courtesy and cooperation from all officials. When we reached Khartoum on Christmas day, Mr. Peter L. Shinnie, Commissioner for Archaeology, broke his holiday to welcome us and placed himself generously at our service, despite the fact that he was leaving in a few days to begin an excavation. (That excavation is another story.

It was a month's penetration of some mounds at Tangasi below the Fourth Cataract. It is a story for Mr. Cooney, the Director of the American Research Center, to tell. Mr. Cooney was unfortunately unable to join the dig because of ill health, but placed the Brooklyn Museum in association with the Sudan archaeological service in investigating these mounds.)

"I shall not go into detail about our visits to the Museum in Khartoum or to the archaeological sites in the Sudan. It is worth remarking that a very high proportion of the work in the Sudan was American: Breasted's copying expeditions in 1905-07 for the University of Chicago, and Reisner's extraordinarily successful excavations at the Third and Fourth Cataracts between 1913 and 1923 on behalf of Harvard and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The work carried out under the University of Pennsylvania in Nubia from 1907 to 1910 should also be mentioned. An archaeologist remarked to me that the Americans had 'skimmed the cream' in Nubia and the Sudan.

"What I wish to report on in some detail is our copying work in the little Government Museum at Merowe below the Fourth Cataract. (I have to say 'below' for Merowe, rather than 'south of,' because here the Nile happens to flow southwest instead of north. This leads to extreme local confusion, such as calling the town on the west bank 'Merowe east,' because it is established custom that downstream is always north, so that the right bank is always 'east.')

In this Museum were housed some of the statues and inscriptions found by that Boston Museum expedition already mentioned. For Boston, Dr. Nelson and Dr. Richard A. Parker of Brown University are engaged in studying certain stelae of the 'Ethiopian' kings. One of them was in this museum, containing the offering texts of a king who had an outlandish name, something like Si'aspiqa (about 475 B. C.). Further, Mr. Dunham of Boston asked

Dr. Nelson to copy the sarcophagus of King Anlamani (about 600 B. C.).

"The train which serves this Fourth Cataract region runs once a week, arriving on Thursdays and leaving on Sundays, and this gave us ten days at Merowe. It was not too much. We spent about three days seeing the remarkable sites of Nuri, Gebel Barkal, Kurru, and Tangasi, and seven days on the copying. The stela of Si'aspiqa was a relatively simple proposition, but the sarcophagus of Anlamani was formidable. With its lid, it had about 330 square feet of tightly packed carving. The sarcophagus has been cemented about ten inches deep into the floor, and stands up about four feet above the floor. It is very similar to the huge Aspalta sarcophagus in Boston, which Mr. Dunham described in the Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, October 1945, pages 53-57. Photography was out of the question, because of the cramped quarters and the nature of the stone and the carving. It would take weeks to sit down with a notebook and write down an accurate copy of the figures and texts. Therefore, we had come prepared to make rubbings of the sarcophagus for the use of the Boston Museum. (There are a lot of footnotes to this story. The box-like sarcophagus probably weighs around ten tons, and its lid four or five, but each of them had been cemented firmly against any moving or removal. The lid was fixed to small stone pillars just above the floor, but the sarcophagus had been cemented down into the stone floor, so that ten inches of its outside surface was quite invisible. This was probably due to the vigor of a fabulous person, one of Kitchener's right-hand men, Jackson Pasha, an able soldier and administrator. He fell in love with the Merowe area, and it seems that he wanted to make sure that none of its treasures left the place.)

"The rubbing process was simple. Sheets of tough tissue paper about drawing-board size were smoothly fastened to the stone with Scotch

tape. Then we crumpled blue carbon paper into wads and massaged the face of the tissue gently but firmly. As a result, blue outlines of the carved figures and hieroglyphs below appeared on the paper, which could then be stripped off the stone and rolled up for despatch to Boston, where the staff might read it at their slippered ease.

"The old 'Ethiopian' pharoah Anlamani had probably imported into the Sudan good Egyptian priests, artists, and manuscripts. Scenes and inscriptions are very proper Egyptain stuff: the gods and goddesses who protected the dead, the list of hours of the day and night, texts which went back in Egypt at least two thousand years, all done in the classical language and in a highly creditable style of art. We were rubbing that fundamentalist religion I mentioned before.

"It was not an idyll in which languidly moving wads of carbon produced neat blue pictures on the paper. Dr. Nelson and Mrs. Wilson undertook the outside surfaces. Mrs. Wilson also climbed down into the sarcophagus where the black pharaoh once lay and worked at the inscriptions inside. Those near the top of the inside were very neatly and sharply carved, but, as one went deeper, the cramped quarters for the ancient sculptor and the fact that few human eyes had been expected to examine that work produced cruder carving on a rougher surface. That had to be rubbed very carefully. My own task was the under-side of the lid, firmly fixed just thirteen inches above the stone floor. I had to worm my way under on my back, to fasten short strips of paper just above my head, and to rub rather blindly, while tiny scraps of carbon and the dust of decades fell into my face. Since I could not see whether I was producing an accurate copy, I can only hope that the standard nature of those texts will provide Boston with enough parallels from other sources so that they can control the rubbings. That determined man, Jackson

Pasha, with his strong cement, was no hero to me.

"Two rolls containing about 125 sheets of rubbings were mailed from Khartoum to Boston in the middle of January. For fullest accuracy, some one with a notebook should go to Merowe and collate the texts on the sarcophagus, but we warn them...

"Mrs. Wilson and I are now residing at the Chicago House in Luxor, with trips in prospect to Assuan and Tuna el-Gebel. In the autumn I gave a series of lectures called 'The Constitution of Ancient Egypt' at the University of Alexandria, and a lecture on 'Monotheism and Ancient Egypt' at the American University in Cairo. I understand that I shall be invited to lecture in Cairo in April at Fuad and Ibrahim Universities. Early in May we expect to start our homeward trip, with visits to the museums in western Europe. A very profitable and stimulating year will end some time in June in the New York harbor."

It may be added that Klaus Behr, also of the Oriental Institute, has as Fulbright Fellow been assisting Dr. Abu Bakr at the Egyptian Antiquities Department excavation of the Great Pyramid at Giza.

Dr. Arthur Jeffery, Professor of Semitic Languages at Columbia University, has been appointed to succeed Mr. Cooney as Director in Egypt next season. He will be in Cairo from June 1953 to September 1954, and is hoping that he will be able to devote very much of his time to the organization of those activities which are our object. Dr. Jeffery's mail address will be 113 Sharia Kasr al-Aini, and the telephone number of his apartment Cairo 23022.

Professor Jeffery is a widely travelled and a widely known scholar: his Koranic studies have perhaps made him as well-known in Cairo as in this country. In the first World War he was in Indonesia and British India; from 1922 to 1938 he was in Cairo at the School of

Oriental Studies, and made trips all over the Near East. In 1946 and 1947 he was Annual Professor at the American School of Oriental Research, Jerusalem, and acted as Director for the latter part of the year.

Members who are going to Egypt this winter may be interested to know that Dr. Mustafa Amer has recently been appointed Head of the Antiquities Department in Egyptian Government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Schroeder".

Eric Schroeder
Executive Secretary